

Dear Esteemed Members of the General Assembly,

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today. I am here to implore you to restore funding for one of the state's most vital and most successful programs, Care4Kids.

13 months ago, I became the proud father of an amazing baby boy. My wife and I wanted to make sure he would, from the earliest age, learn in a safe, diverse, vibrant, positive environment. We selected a childcare provider that reflected our values, and we feel privileged to send our son to an outstanding daycare program called Saint Martin de Porres. We could not be happier for our son's participation in this daycare program, we see him alongside other terrific children everyday. They laugh, they sing, they learn in a safe, stimulating home made supremely special by the program's director couple, who themselves exude love for all the children they serve.

We're fortunate to be able to afford to send our son to daycare. But were it not for State funding, for the funding you authorize, many – perhaps most – of the other children in this amazing program could not attend, and the program's doors would shutter.

We know these children and their parents. These children want to be engaged, they want to learn, and losing home daycare like Saint Martin de Porres will delay their development. This funding means the difference between whether the single mom of one of the children can work outside the home and bridge her and her daughter away from poverty. It means a hand up to a working poor dad of another child, whose earnings are enough to get by, but insufficient to afford other means to safeguard and educate his son. It means the community will lose a safe house where school buses pick up and drop off kids everyday because home daycares function to anchor their surrounding neighborhood and offer children a safe place.

Reducing funding for early childhood education increases the likelihood that children who have become like family to my son will fall through the cracks and become "just another statistic." Home daycare like St. Martin de Porres saves the state just as defunding ensures exponentially higher future costs both in raw dollars and in community resources. It means some of these children are at risk of falling into the wrong crowds at ever younger ages, it means they socialize later and learn less. Defunding early childhood education causes some of the most predictable, well-studied, wide-ranging, expensive negative consequences of any cuts you will consider; yet funding Care4Kids creates some of the most predictable, well-studied, wide-ranging and cost-saving benefits we could ask for. As a taxpayer, I call that a great use of my tax dollars.

In closing, while you have many difficult choices ahead, few investments now offer as much savings and social benefits in the future as funding Care4Kids today. Care4Kids is one of the state's most effective means to educate and empower children and their parents. Please restore Care4Kids funding so Connecticut's neediest children have stable, nurturing home childcare opportunities and so their parents can better fulfill their duties to their families and communities.

Sincerely,

Gerald Garcia
216 Yale Avenue
New Haven, CT 06515